

Minnesota Department of Health

Change in School Immunization Law on Reporting History of Varicella Disease

Beginning in September 2010, there will be a change in the way a child's history of varicella disease is documented to meet the requirements of Minnesota's School Immunization Law. This change will affect health care providers who see school-age children, particularly those entering kindergarten and 7th grade.

What is changing?

Starting on September 1, 2010, Minnesota schools and child care centers can no longer accept a parent/guardian's signature as proof that a child has had varicella disease and does not need varicella shot(s).

Instead, a health care provider, which includes a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant, will need to sign a form, such as the MDH Pupil Immunization Record or Pediatric Immunization Record, verifying that the child does not need to get varicella shot(s) for school or child care because:

- The shot(s) are contraindicated for medical reasons, or
- Adequate immunity exists due to a history of disease that was either laboratory confirmed, medically diagnosed, **or adequately described to them by the parent to indicate past varicella infection [NEW].**

Why did the law change?

As more children get their varicella shots, we have less varicella disease and more parents/guardians who have never seen a case of varicella and can't recognize it. The clinical knowledge of a health care provider is needed to make sure a child had varicella – and not some other disease – so they are truly immune.

The change has actually been in the Minnesota School Immunization Law (Minn. Rules, Ch. 4604.0900) since varicella was added to it in 2004, but it was not scheduled to take effect until September 1, 2010.

What can health care providers and clinics do to help implement this change?

- Accept a parent's description of past or current varicella disease over the phone. Have a system in place to do this so they do not have to make an extra visit.
- Ensure that health care workers in your clinic document history of disease in patients' records, e.g., post reminders in exam rooms, charting areas, send out clinic-wide announcements.
- Remember to document history of varicella disease in the state immunization registry, the Minnesota Immunization Information Connection (MIIC).
- Modify, if necessary, your clinic's immunization record to include information about varicella disease history.

For more information

For more information about Minnesota's School Immunization Law, call the Minnesota Department of Health Immunization Program at 651-201-5503 or toll free at 1-800-657-3970 or visit www.health.state.mn.us/immunize (click on Immunization Laws in the left-hand column).



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